



Site Navigation

- Cleanups, Remediation
- Emergency Response
- Licensing
- Permits, Registrations
- Preventing Pollution
- Recycling
- Reporting
- Rules

- Data
- Forms
- Maps
- Public Notices
- Publications
- Records
- Webcasts

- About Us
- Contact Us

How 's our Customer Service? Please fill out our [Customer Satisfaction Survey](#)

You are here: [Home](#) → [Publications](#) → [Periodicals](#) → [Natural Outlook](#) → [Spring 2004](#) → New
Ozone Standard in Place

» Questions or Comments:
ac@tceq.texas.gov

New Ozone Standard in Place

Counties learn their fate under the federal 8-hour ozone standard.

Regions are singled out for noncompliance with 8-hour requirement

In this story:

[Ozone Watch](#)

[Early Action Compacts](#)

Twenty Texas counties now face a federal deadline in three or six years to come into compliance with a stricter standard for ozone.

Using the health-based 8-hour standard, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated three metropolitan areas in Texas as being in nonattainment. Those are Houston-Galveston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Beaumont-Port Arthur.

A fourth area, which is anchored by San Antonio, was listed as nonattainment-deferred, meaning the area will not be subject to the requirements of a nonattainment area as long as it meets certain voluntary commitments.

EPA's nationwide list, released in April, showed that 474 counties in 31 states are failing federal air quality standards. Most are in the eastern portion of the country and in California.

[Back to the top](#)

Ozone Watch

Of the six pollutants covered under the federal Clean Air Act, Texas is in compliance with all but ozone.

Ground-level ozone, a component of smog, is formed when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, industrial refineries, chemical plants, trees and plants, and other sources react chemically in sunlight. Nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds are the leading ozone precursors.

The TCEQ issues daily ozone forecasts due to health concerns associated with breathing the pollutant.

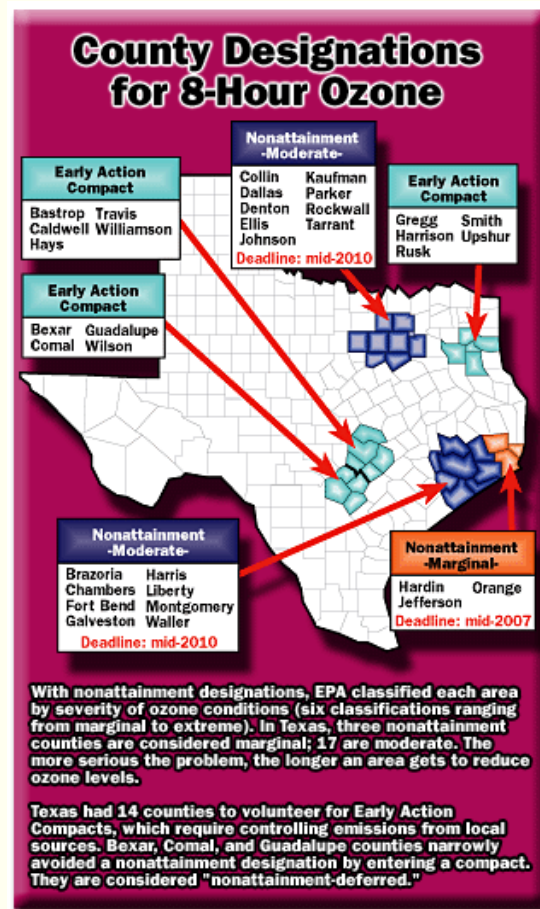
EPA established the 1-hour ozone standard in the 1970s, requiring states to report exceedances of 0.12 parts per million (ppm) during a 1-hour period. Subsequent medical studies and growing concerns over prolonged exposure to ozone led the agency in 1997 to propose a tougher standard--0.08 ppm, as measured over an 8-hour period.

The 8-hour standard was intended to replace the 1-hour; however, a series of legal challenges postponed implementation. In 2001, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld EPA's authority to set air quality standards based solely on public health concerns, and the agency was clear to proceed with the 8-hour program.

Last year, states made recommendations on nonattainment designations.

As for Texas, all the nonattainment areas already have a number of control strategies in place designed to achieve compliance with the 1-hour standard. For example, tailpipe testing is required as part of annual safety inspections in the Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth areas.

The pollution-cutting strategies are spelled out in the State Implementation Plan. The Houston and Beaumont



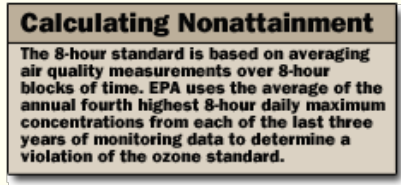
strategies will be reviewed in late May by TCEQ commissioners.

Meanwhile, the federal 1-hour standard and its associated deadlines are expected to expire June 2005, leaving the 8-hour standard as the driving force for states trying to address ozone problems.

[Back to the top](#)

Early Action Compacts

Beyond the nonattainment areas, other parts of Texas are targeted for air improvements.



Fourteen counties volunteering to enter into an Early Action Compact (EAC) have agreed to undertake a variety of measures to reduce ozone levels. As long as these counties achieve agreed-upon milestones, they will not slip into nonattainment status.

The San Antonio area received the nonattainment-deferred designation covering Bexar, Comal, and Guadalupe counties. But EPA has decided to allow the three, in addition to Wilson County, to remain at EAC status--as long as they meet the commitments made in the compact.

The other EAC areas--in Central Texas and Northeast Texas--were in attainment of the 8-hour standard. The control measures spelled out in their compacts will help them stay in compliance.

All three areas have submitted to the TCEQ proposed pollution-reduction strategies that are individually tailored to their own emissions problems. Strategies include implementing tailpipe inspections, requiring service stations to recover emissions from tanker deliveries, and implementing new cleanup requirements in technology and business.

Commissioners will discuss the local proposals and decide whether to incorporate them in the revised State Implementation Plan, which must be submitted to EPA by the end of 2004.

[Back to the top](#)

[Print this](#)



texas.gov



Stimulus
Funding